



Office of Emergency Services

NEWS RELEASE

West Virginia Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety

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Caution Urged for Residents Under Flood Warnings and Watches

CHARLESTON, W.Va.-The West Virginia Office of Emergency Services is urging residents to use extreme caution if they live or work in areas under flood watches or warnings. More people in the United States die in flood events than any other type of natural disaster.

"We hope affected residents will closely monitor rising river levels," said Stephen Kappa, WVOES director. "Please evacuate if you see water rising toward your home. Lives are more important than property."

"Please remember your elderly neighbors who may need assistance evacuating."

Here are some suggestions to help residents stay safe during heavy rains and flooding:

- Know your area's flood risk.
- If it has been raining hard for several hours or steadily raining for several days, monitor water levels in nearby rivers or streams.
- Be aware flash floods can take only a few minutes or a few hours to develop.
- Listen frequently to local radio or TV stations for flood information. Have a battery-operated radio with fresh batteries.
- Have an evacuation and communication plan for your family. Know where you will go and how you will contact each other.
- Make arrangements for pets, because pets may not be allowed into emergency shelters for health and space reasons.
- Keep a full tank of gas in your vehicle in case you need to evacuate.
- If your car stalls, abandon it immediately and climb to higher ground. Many deaths have resulted from attempts to move stalled vehicles.
- Never let children play near creeks or storm drains when the water is rising or high.

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- Remember that swimming skills have nothing to do with surviving a flooded creek or stream.
- Be aware that debris or garbage in floodwater can easily hurt or trap a person under water.
- Do not drive on a flooded street or road. Even small amounts of water can sweep a car or truck away. Washed away roads or bridges may not be visible.
- If you see someone fall into swift water never enter the water to go after him or her in a boat or attempt a swim rescue. If possible, throw the victim a detached floatation device (a car seat or a large, closed ice chest will work). Dial 9-1-1 immediately and ask for swiftwater rescue teams to respond.
- Never try to outrun a flashflood. Seek higher ground immediately.
- Have disaster kit with necessary supplies on hand:
 - Flashlight and extra batteries
 - Portable, battery-operated radio and extra batteries
 - First aid kit and manual
 - Emergency food and water
 - Manual can opener
 - Essential medicines
 - Cash and credit cards
 - Sturdy shoes